

Help Humping, Barking, Destructive, Reactive Dogs Overcome Dysregulation: 4 Case Studies

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

00:00:00

Today I'm going to share four case studies with you. A dog that humped their owner when they got overexcited, a dog that destroyed the home when they were left alone, a dog that screamed their head off when they were left alone, and finally a dog that had a complete meltdown if they saw a dog on a walk.

I'm going to share the stories of where they started, and I'm going to share how they went from a place of complete dysregulation to a place of complete habituation. And there's a bit of a twist to these stories.

00:00:47

Hi, I'm Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. Four case studies and I'm starting off with sharing the twist. And the twist is three of the four dogs were my dogs. And all four of them followed the protocols that I set out to overcome the challenge. Let's start with dog number one, the more, the easy one, was Momentum.

So, Momentum as a puppy, anytime she got super excited, maybe people were visiting, maybe I was about to play a game that she loved, she would grab me by the waist and start humping me. Now, the other-side-of-the-track dog training methodology would say, "That dog's being dominant. That [dog's trying to dominate you.](#)"

00:01:29

And there's the problem with assigning human emotions to a dog's behavior. That's a dog who got excited and didn't know what to do. At that time, she wasn't super good on tugging. She really wasn't fond of tugging. She knew she liked to play the games. She knew she wanted to greet people, and she had no way of expressing that emotion.

So, I had to go from a place of seeing her in dysfunction, knowing what the triggers were, my journal came in handy, and co-regulating by saying things like "sit" or "down" when I saw that she was getting over aroused. At the same time, building her [drive for tug](#), building her drive to hold onto toys, she actually started shaking them, which I wasn't fond of, but it's better than humping.

00:02:15

A gradual process, she figured out what was a better way to express her emotions and the excitement of getting to work became so second nature, it was almost like white noise. And it didn't happen overnight. But eventually she learned there was no need to hump. Alright, so that was a relatively easy one. There was an obvious hole for that dog in how to express her emotions.

She didn't really feel like tugging. She sometimes would like, do the zoomies, but I was just helping her to show a more appropriate way to outwardly express what she inwardly was feeling.

00:02:53

Alright, so let's get to a more interesting one or one that might hit home with some of you. Let's talk about a dog who had [separation anxiety](#). And so, this story is about a Golden Doodle who my friends owned.



Help Humping, Barking, Destructive, Reactive Dogs Overcome Dysregulation: 4 Case Studies

00:03:06

She was 15 months old, and my friends asked if myself and my friend Lynda Orton-Hill could help overcome the separation anxiety the dog had. Because it was completely ruining their life. They're first-time dog owners, they thought they did the right thing. They traveled a lot for business. Took the puppy everywhere they went.

But on one occasion when the puppy was three months old, they had to leave it with one of their parents, who on the first night when the puppy whined in her crate, decided she no longer needed a crate and was allowed to sleep in bed, never put in a crate again.

00:03:37

And even though the dog had great [Crate Games](#), they got to a place where at 15 months old, the puppy would often go and choose to decompress in the crate. But if anybody ever closed the crate door, the [puppy had a meltdown](#). They got there by unconsciously doing a lot of wrong things.

For example, they were in a hotel room. They knew they couldn't leave her in a crate. They wanted to go out for supper. They put her in a bathroom. Strange environment, "I don't know this place." She started whining. They waited outside the door to see if she would settle. She went from whining to barking, barking to howling, howling to just hysterics and then they went in.

00:04:13

And so, she was building up a strong repertoire of 'this is how vocalizing gets my people.' Now, I'm not saying that separation anxiety is a learned behavior. I'm saying that in this case, the vocalizing was reinforced so much in increments, it got to be a learned behavior. And I'm not saying that all separation anxiety is a learned behavior, so make that clear.

And so, my friends just never left the dog alone. When they were on the road, they hired a nanny to stay with the dog in their hotel room all day long. And at 15 months we had a challenge. And so, first thing we had to do is go through the list. Nutrition, yep, great nutrition. Number two, what about exercise? Yeah, very inconsistent.

00:05:01

And so, when we would let Rosie off leash, she ran and ran and ran and ran. That was a huge thing, they took her for walks, but there wasn't the opportunity to have a lot of off leash running. So that was big.

What about the environment? How much enrichment? They had a lot of great enrichment toys. They had you know, Ottosson's puzzle games. They had a lot of it, but they were using the enrichment inappropriately. Now what would that look like?

00:05:28

So, enrichment is a great way to co-regulate with a puppy while you're on the way to helping them self-regulate. But what happens, stuffed Kongs and enrichment toys, things like the puppy bombs, people put them in and then admire the puppy playing with them. And so, the puppy learns that it's just going to entertain you. What we want from these enrichment toys is to be able to put them in and leave the room.

You can just go into the bathroom and then come back out. Helping the puppy to learn "I can be okay when you're not there." It's definitely co-regulation, my friend. I mentioned [in our last episode](#) is not self-regulation because the puppy is being entertained by the game.



Help Humping, Barking, Destructive, Reactive Dogs Overcome Dysregulation: 4 Case Studies

00:06:14

But it's allowing the puppy to experience you leaving the room. Alright, so enrichment they used them but inappropriately. [Relaxation protocol](#), they didn't follow through with that.

Choice-based games, yeah, they played a lot of choice-based games, but they didn't push the puppy to a place of challenge. Just introduced it, moved on to another one, introduced it, moved on to another one.

So again, it was always the puppy earning reinforcement without any challenge and any failure. Point number six, sleep. Yeah, the puppy got lots of sleep as long as it was with them. Had to be touching them at all times. Alone time, yeah, that's not happening. No. Rosie the Doodle says no to alone time.

00:06:55

[Did they journal](#)? They didn't know really enough about first-time dog owners. And did they follow a strategically layered program? They started and then like many people, they just fell off and said, "We'll just manage this and maybe she'll outgrow it."

And at 15 months they were having challenges.

So, what does co-regulation look like?

Number one, it's using things like enrichment games. Like puppy bombs, toilet papers with cookies inside. That Doodle loved to shred. I would give her a puppy bomb, a toilet paper roll with cookies inside, and she would get the cookies out and then shred every single little, tiny piece of that toilet paper until it was tiny little bits.

00:07:33

So that got to be a great routine part of our day where I could leave the room and come back in, she was still shredding. Eventually there'd be some time where she would have to wait before I came back in the room.

Anytime somebody was going out with another dog, another enrichment game would come. So, she would play that alone, not being entertained. Or a stuffed Kong, and we mixed it up so there was never something predictable.

So, the enrichment games were never predicted. At the same time, we used a remote feeder to be able to let her know that when we leave, good things happen.

Building up her ability to deal with being alone. Now, it wasn't easy. It didn't happen overnight. It took till day seven before you could leave the room and she was fine with it.

00:08:23

Couldn't leave her for a long period of time, but that's where the relaxation protocol and [The FRIDA Protocol](#) really kicked off. That's when things really started to go. That plus we continue to exercise her. We continue to play choice-based games.

Today my friends happily report they can leave her in a crate in any hotel room. She still would rather be with them, but she might whine and then settle down.

She's learned that dog time and human time are separate from each other. So, co-regulation for a long period of time when there's already established problem. And then we moved to a place where the dog could self-regulate on short bursts of time.



Help Humping, Barking, Destructive, Reactive Dogs Overcome Dysregulation: 4 Case Studies

00:09:05

Next up, let's talk about Tater Salad. So, if you guys don't know the [backstory](#), Tater couldn't be walked because he pulled people down the street because he wanted to meet every dog and person out there. And so, they didn't exercise him.

Nutrition, they just, you know, fed whatever grocery store kibble that was available. Nutrition, another one.

00:09:26

Environment, they felt guilty about leaving him in a crate so long because the lady who owned him worked very long hours and then got a boyfriend the same week that she got Tater and so there was a lot of 'let's hope he outgrows it' meanwhile, he learned to self-regulate by destuffing furniture. And he destuffed a lot of furniture.

But they didn't give him anything to chew on because he would take his chew toy, picture a bulldog jaw, and he would push it up against the furniture to hold it so he could chew. And then when the bone fell, he would just chew the furniture, right? It was okay.

And there was no training because there was no time for training. So, there was no choice-based training. And that's how we end up with Tater living in our house.

00:10:10

And so, the first thing we do is we create a gated community where we give him bones.

Now, I kid you not, for the first probably year that Tater lived in my house, if he was awake and not eating, I would guess 80% of the time he was chewing on a bone. And I would say that might be 5 or 10% of the time now.

He still likes to chew and if you give him a meaty bone, oh he'll have at it. But he won't just pick up a bone for the sake of chewing nearly the same. Alright, maybe 10% of the time when he is awake now, where before it was nonstop.

00:10:45

So, we had to, a unique situation, teach him how to chew without pushing it against things, that's where we could see a real trigger, and then give him outlets for his anxiety.

Yes, being allowed to walk, being allowed to sniff, being allowed to investigate. All of these things, it's a transition, you co-regulate, while you build you see, "Oh, you can chew a bone in your ex-pen without pushing it up against things?"

What all that we did, people want to know what we did, we just shaped him to go into a bed. And then the bone would come in the bed. And if he got out of the bed, then we would get a better bone. And if he went back in the bed, the better bone went in the bed. And eventually he learned chewing in the bed is a place to be and he could push it against the dog bed, and it was never a problem.

00:11:31

So of course, using the top ten, journaling was a big part of it. [Videoing our training](#), game-based training, exercise, enrichment, and Tater is a great family pet now. He hasn't destroyed anything in my home except for one dog bed in his first six months. And it had to be a brand-new dog bed. And it had to be the only \$300 dog bed in the house. Okay, so we all learned our lessons.



Help Humping, Barking, Destructive, Reactive Dogs Overcome Dysregulation: 4 Case Studies

00:12:01

Moving on to case study number four, and this is one that might strike a chord with many of you. And this is my dog This! who was completely dysregulated if [she saw another dog out on a walk](#). It didn't matter how close or how far she lost her mind.

All of the hackles on the back of her neck would come up. She would scream, not just bark, scream. She would try to get in behind me. If the dog came anywhere near us, she would lunge and snap. It was anarchy.

00:12:34

And so how often did I allow that to rehearse? Like maybe once and then I went and journaled, "This is the dysregulation I'm seeing. What can I do?"

Now back then, we didn't realize the [impact of her nutrition](#). She had great nutrition. She just didn't have great nutrition for her. So that would've solved a lot of problems and would've taken me a lot faster to help her become more regulated around dogs.

But here's what the co-regulation looked like. Number one, I never took her for a walk where there would be any dogs.

Around our property? Yes.

Did I take her where there were other dogs? Absolutely. But I never took her on a path or a street where she would have to see other dogs.

00:13:21

What I would do, I would take her to a place where I knew there were dogs, but I also knew I could get like hundreds of meters away from them.

So, I would go to a park on Lake Ontario, and I would sit on a bench with a little dog bed, and I'd bring a book and I would give her a big meaty bone. So, the dogs were a long way away and she was just learning, and she was just chewing on her bone.

Am I helping her to self-regulate? Trick question.

No, I'm not. I'm co-regulating by the distance away from the other dogs, and by giving her something that's really amazing for her.

Would there be a little bit of classical conditioning? "I'm chewing on this, and dogs are walking by." I don't think so because the dogs are really too far away.

00:14:06

So, we would do that and eventually I could be closer to the path.

So, I might be maybe five strides from the path. And instead of giving her a big meaty bone, I would give her like just drop cookies in her bed.

I would teach her things like chin target behavior where she would rest her chin on my hand. I would just reinforce; we're now being operant. We are now allowing her to choose a behavior, and it didn't have to do anything to do with the dogs.

I was getting her nearer the dogs without her having to be forced to engage with the dogs or look at the dogs. When I could see she was more relaxed, then we went to a co-regulation that was leading me to a place where I could get out of the picture for her.



Help Humping, Barking, Destructive, Reactive Dogs Overcome Dysregulation: 4 Case Studies

00:14:49

And that was, we would do some tug games and then I would stop. I would use my chin target to help her see, orient to the dog down the path, and then I would move my chin target away.

And when she looked back at me, I would either tug or I would give cookies.

Now, if the dog was close, obviously I wasn't going to do this when the dog was super close, but I would never use tug when the dog was, you know within 30, 40 feet of us, because I didn't want the chance of that other dog getting excited and coming and barking and lunging at her. So, I would use cookies.

00:15:25

The closer the dog got, the more I would co-regulate by moving her further back off the path. Eventually, she could just sit beside me in Reinforcement Zone.

Her confidence had got to a place where she could look at the dog and look at me exactly as I wrote about in 2004, in my book [Shaping Success](#), where I talked about my dog Buzzy, who was reactive to my then puppy Decaff.

'Look at what you're upset by. Look back at me for reinforcement.'

I mean, there were many, many steps in between that, but that's what I've been teaching since the late Nineties.

00:15:59

That whatever you're distracted by, you can [look at it and then look back at me](#).

Good choices get good rewards. Alright.

And we're giving high value reinforcement.

Eventually I could not use the chin target. I could let This! look at the dog, and look at me. But I would never let a dog surprise her.

So, if I saw a dog at a distance, maybe she was facing this way and a dog was coming, I would always orient her towards the dog.

We got to a place where she was self-regulating in that she would look at the dog, look back at me.

And then I could get to a place where I didn't reward every dog. It might just be every other dog, or I would reward three dogs, but not the fourth.

00:16:38

So, we had gotten securely to a place of self-regulation. So, I could take This! to different parks.

I'd always start a little bit further away, but eventually she could be anywhere near dogs. Dogs actually would come up and sniff her.

That's when I knew we were moving to a place of habituation.

She's had dogs snarl at her, growl at her, lunge at her, and she has not reacted back. She has looked at me, been heavily reinforced, and I've gotten her out of there.

But that's what you can do when you make sure that your expectations are never higher than the training that you've put in with your dog.





Episode: #220

Help Humping, Barking, Destructive, Reactive Dogs Overcome Dysregulation: 4 Case Studies

00:17:16

That you are number two, always aware that [your dog's behavior is communicating something](#) to you.

And you're going to take that communication on board and then work to move from a place of dysregulation to co-regulation as you're on the way to helping that dog ideally be self-regulated.

And you may or may not ever get to a place of white noise, and that's okay. Keep advocating for your dog.

Don't believe the narratives of people saying, "He's being x, y, z."

Don't believe the narratives of the people who are saying, "He's just this, I had a dog just like that." Smile, thank them for their input and come on back and review this video one more time.

00:17:59

I'd love to hear from you. This is our fourth episode [on this topic](#). There's so many questions about it. I thought it was really worthwhile to do a deep dive on it.

So please leave me a comment. Let me know if there's anything that I said that just doesn't make sense because we can go deeper.

See you next time right here on Shape by Dog.

Resources:

[Podcast Episode 46: Is Your Dog Trying to Dominate You and What You Can Do About It](#)

[Podcast Episode 89: Why Dogs Should Not Tug: The Truth Revealed](#)

[Podcast Episode 200: Solve Your Dog's Separation Anxiety With FRIDA: Expanding Calm With Functional Relaxation](#)

[Crate Games Online](#)

[Podcast Episode 98: Puppy Home Alone: Are You Creating Chaos or Calm?](#)

[Podcast Episode 219: Self-Regulation Helping Shy, Hyper, Anxious Or Fearful Dogs To A Better Life](#)

[Podcast Episode 191: Get Your Dog To Calm Down With This Common Sense Protocol For Relaxation](#)

[Podcast Episode 71: Pro Dog Trainer's Secret to Help Your Naughty Dog](#)

[Podcast Episode 78: How to Train a Rescue Dog with Behavior Problems](#)

[Podcast Episode 133: Become Your Own Dog Training Coach With This Video Strategy](#)

[Podcast Episode 111: How An Anchor Dog Can Help Overcome Your Dog's Anxiety Or Reactivity](#)

[Podcast Episode 204: Dog Behavior And Diet: Recovery For This! Beyond Dog Training Part 2](#)

[Book: Shaping Success by Susan Garrett](#)

[YouTube Video: Dog Training Tip Reorienting at Triggers and Doors: Fence Fighting, Reactivity, Barrier Frustration](#)

[Podcast Episode 189: All The Things That Influence Your Dog's Behavior And What Behavior Tells You](#)

[Podcast Episode 217: Understanding Emotional Regulation In Dogs To Create Calm](#)



Help Humping, Barking, Destructive, Reactive Dogs Overcome Dysregulation: 4 Case Studies

About Susan

A world-leading educator of dog trainers, Susan is also one of the most successful agility competitors of the last three decades. She has won multiple Gold Medals at National or World Championship events with every dog she has ever owned over the past 30 years. Susan was one of the very first dog trainers to share knowledge online when she opened her "Clicker Dogs" website many years ago. Susan has helped hundreds of thousands of people enjoy a great relationship with their dogs through her workshops and keynote speaking around the world, award winning books, DVDs, magazine articles, blog posts, podcasts, free dog training and dog agility video series, and online dog training programs.



A natural teacher and an entertaining speaker, Susan is world renowned for her dog training knowledge and practical application of that knowledge. Her understanding of how to apply science-based learning principles to both competitive and family pet dog training has been pivotal in changing how dogs are trained.

Susan is now helping many thousands of dog owners in 82 countries have the best relationship possible with their dogs. The real joy for her comes from bringing confidence to dogs and their owner through playful interactions and relationship building games that are grounded firmly in the science of how animals learn.



Meet Us Online

- Website <https://dogsthat.com>
- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/SusanGarrettDogAgility/>
- Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/SusanGarrettDogsThat/>
- TikTok <https://www.tiktok.com/@dogsthat>
- LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/dogsthat>
- Pinterest <https://pinterest.ca/dogsthatcom/>
- Twitter <https://twitter.com/susangarrett>
- YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/c/DogsThat>
- YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/ClickerDogs>

